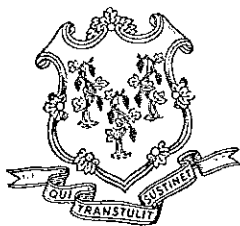


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On

**Senate Bill 593: AAC SEVERE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL  
IMPAIRMENT AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE**

Committee on Labor and Public Employees

January 29, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am here to testify in support of SB 593, AN ACT CONCERNING SEVERE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENT AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE.

SB 593 would ameliorate some of the unfortunate changes made to the workers' compensation law in 1993. Specifically, it would expand workers' compensation coverage to individuals suffering from a mental or emotional impairment as a direct result of witnessing the death or maiming of another human being whose death or maiming was caused by an act of a person. In recent years medical science has made it increasingly clear that a mental health impairment can be as disabling as a physical impairment. Unfortunately, our current statutes do not reflect this new understanding. This bill would require that the worker be diagnosed by a psychiatrist or psychologist who must determine that the impairment originated from witnessing the death or maiming or the immediate aftermath of the death or maiming. The immediate aftermath is limited to six hours after the scene is secured by law enforcement. The visual witnessing must also be causally connected to the employee's employment. Passage of this bill would

allow workers who are suffering from specific work related mental trauma to benefit from workers' compensation. This would be a positive change and would bring our statutes in line with the modern understanding of mental health.

I am pleased that this year's bill does not limit the coverage to an intentional act; it would seem that a person's mental impairment would not depend on whether or not the act she or he witnessed was intentional.

Thank you for considering this important issue.